

## **“The Warmth and Cleanliness of It”: Bathing in A Court of Thorns and Roses**

Across several works of young adult fantasy fiction, including *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and *Graceling* by Kristin Cashore, bathing is commonly used as a symbol of transition. The young adult high fantasy series *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series by Sarah J. Maas, however, utilizes the symbol of the bath and the act of bathing to create additional meaning. In this paper, I will examine the use of bathing as a symbol of social transformation and the act of bathing as a step in the female hero's journey in Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series. Although a prolific and bestselling writer of young adult fantasy, Maas has received little scholarly attention at this point. My paper will also contextualize Feyre, the female hero in Maas's series, according to the scholarly tradition of the hero as established by Joseph Campbell, Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, Maureen Murdock, and Lori M. Campbell. While the majority of young adult fantasy fiction is analyzed in terms of either its status as young adult literature or fantasy literature, this essay will examine a young adult fantasy series holistically according to the approach established by Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn. In order to situate my argument within the three texts in the series, I will catalogue every instance of bathing across the trilogy to establish patterns of transformation, growth, and heroism. In this series, bathing functions as a symbol of home, class ascension, and sexuality. Bathing also acts as a step of the hero's journey, functioning as a mode of initiation both to the realm of magic and to female power. Reading the use of bathing and the symbol of the bath in this series is important because it establishes a feminized activity, taking a bath, as a means of achieving power.